

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-02 EB-08 COME-00 OMB-01
TRSE-00 DOTE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01
USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 PM-04 NSC-05 SS-15 /068 W
-----091301Z 109161 /44

R 091202Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0375
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 0588

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: EAID, YE
SUBJ:DEVELOPMENT IN YEMEN: ROADS.

SUMMARY: ROAD-BUILDING IS LEADING SECTOR OF YARG
DEVELOPMENT OF INFRA-STRUCTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE ABDAL AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI TOOK OFFICE TWO YEARS AGO
ROAD PROJECTS HAVE BEEN STARTED THROUGHOUT YEMEN. ONE SUCH
PROJECT, BETWEEN SANA AND MARIB, WILL TIE THE EASTERN PART OF
YEMEN INTO THE MARKETS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICES OF SANA,AND
REDUCE PRESENT, BACK-BREAKING EIGHT HOUR TRIP TO SMOOTH,
TWO-HOUR TRIP. THE UAE IS UNDERWRITING THE ESTIMATED
\$47.3 MILLION COST. THE \$30 MILLION THE SAUDI ARE NOW
DISBURISNG FOR WORK ON THE DHAMAR-BAYDA ROAD WILL OPEN UP
THE POPULOUS SOUTHEAST PART OF YEMEN, WHILE WORLD BANK
ROADS TO TAIZ AND TURBA FROM THE SOUTHERN END OF THE
RUSSIAN HIGHWAY WILL MAKE THE FAMOUS HUIJARRIYA REGION
MUCH MORE ACCESSIBLE. THE PAVING OF THE SANA-TUIZ ROAD
HAS ENDED ALTHOUGH THE GERMANS WHO FINANCED THIS
\$40 MILLION PROJECT, HAVE ALLOCATED MORE MONEY FOR
MAINTENANCE. THE CHINESE ROAD, FROM SANA TO SAADA
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IS ALL BUT FUNISHED, AND A SPUR IS REACHING OUT TO THE WEST
FROM UMRAN TO HAJJA. THE CHINESE HAVE EARMARKED
SOME OF THEIR NEW \$27 MILLION CREDIT TO COMPLETE THIS
PROJECT. A YR 20 MILLION PROJECT IS PRODUCING
DETAILED SPECIFICATIONS FOR ANOTHER 2000 KILOMETERS OF
MAIN AND FEEDER ROADS. THIS WILL INCLUDE ROADS TO
KEY TRIBAL REDOUBTS LIKE JIHANA (IN THE KHAWLAN AL-TIJYAL)

AND BEIT AL-SAID (BENI HUSHAYSH) PLUS DOZENS OF ROADS
IN RECALCITRANT NORTHEAST PART OF THE COUNTRY.

2. THIS BURST OF ROAD BUILDING IS LIKELY TO HAVE AS
MUCH SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT AS THE ORIGINAL ROADS
BUILT IN THE 60'S AND LINKING SANA, TAIZ AND HODEIDA.
THE IMPORTANT ATTACHED TO ROADS BY THE YARG IS REFLECTED
IN THE FACT THAT THEY EAT UP 86 PERCENT OF THE BUDGET FOR
COMMUNICATIONS, WITH MUCH SMALLER SUMS GOING TO AIRPORTS,
HARBORS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS.

3. PICTURE IS NOT ALL BRIGHT, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE YEMEN
STILL LACKS ANY ROAD LINK TO OUOKIDE WORLD TO NORTH.
HODEIDA TO JIZAN, ON COAST, IS PRESENTLY TRIP THAT
TAKES TWO AND A HALF DAYS OVER SAND AND SINKHOLES.
SAADAH TO THE SAUDI CITY OF NAJRAN TAKES ONLY EIGHT
HOURS BUT IS VERY HEAVILY TRAVELLED ALTHOUGH IT IS LITTLE
MORE THAN A TRACK ACROSS STONLY RIDGES AND DOWN WATERCOURSES.
SAADA ROAD WAS PROMISED IN 1970 BY THE SAUDIS,WHO NOW SAY
THE ENGINEERING WILL BE FINISHED SHORTLY, ALLOWING A TENDER
WITHIN FIVE MONTHS, THE SAUDIS HAVE ALSO PROMISED AN EARLY
START ON CONSTRUCTION IN YEMEN ON THE ROAD NORTH OF HODEIDA,
ALSO, ANNOUNCED ORIGINALLY IN 1970. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS
LIKELY TO BE THREE YEARS BEFORE YEMEN WILL HAVE A PAVED,
ALL-WEATHER ROAD TO THE NORTH.

4. INTERESTING SIDELIGHT IS THAT ABDAL AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI
MADE AND PUBLISHED LIST OF ALL ABOVE ROAD PROJECTS AT
TIME HE BECAUSE PRIME MINISTER IN JANUARY 1975.
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AS STATEMENT OF INTENTIONS THEN REGARDED AS REMARKABLE
EXAMPLE OF YEMENI ABILITY TO REACH BEYOND ITS GRASP,
LIST IS REMARKABLE TODAY BECAUSE, WITH EXCEPTTION TO TWO
SAUDI ROADS, ABDAL AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI MADE GOOD ON ALL ITS
PROMISES IN FIELD OF COMMUNICATIONS.

COMMENT: IT IS ROADS WHICH WILL, IN THE HAMDI SCHEME,
SUBORDINATE THE TRIBES TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, PROVIDING
THE CHANNEL FOR GETTING EDUCATION, PRODUCTS, GOVERNMENT
OFFICIALS INTO THE HINTERLAND. PERHAPS HIS ROLE HAS BEEN
PRIMARILY THAT OF A CATALYST,BUT, IN ANY CASE, ABDAL AZIZ
ABD AL-GHANI HAS CLEARLY SERVICED BOTH HAMDI AND YEMEN WELL
IN THIS KEY AREA OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT.
SCOTES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONSTRUCTION, HIGHWAYS
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SANA00588
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770046-0344
Format: TEL
From: SANA
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770258/aaaabzhp.tel
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3364532
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEVELOPMENT IN YEMEN: ROADS. SUMMARY: ROAD-BUILDING IS LEADING SECTOR OF YARG DEVELOPMENT OF INFRA-STRUCTURE. END SUMMARY.
TAGS: EAID, YE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5ed418c9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009